

Buffalo Grove, IL - U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) opened today's 10th District Small Business Economic Development Forum by highlighting the top role small businesses play in employing Americans. Held at the Buffalo Grove Village Hall, the forum brought together federal and state leaders to help Tenth District small businesses to incorporate, expand and export. Kirk surprised some attendees, noting that 97 percent of U.S. exporters are small businesses. Nearly two-thirds of exporting small businesses employ fewer than 20 people but account for exports totaling over \$250 billion annually.

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"Small businesses are the lifeblood of our nation's economy," said Congressman Kirk. "With e-mail and the Internet, small business owners are finding more customers overseas to boost sales and employment. The Tenth District is already home to hundreds of small businesses that rely on customers overseas to thrive."

The forum featured two panels of speakers, including federal/state government representatives and small business advocacy organizations. Each panelist provided details on how they could help 10th District entrepreneurs. Attendees heard presentations from: Steven Galvan of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Mary Joyce, U.S. Export Assistance Center, Kathleen Bishop, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Michael Fields, Director Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center, Sean Heather, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Dave Young, Lake County Partners and Brad Templeman, Chicago Manufacturing Center.

"Abraham Lincoln said that we cannot expand employment by opposing employers. We know that small businesses employ more Americans than any other sector of the economy. We must make sure that Illinois welcomes entrepreneurs and provides them with the tools they need to innovate and expand," said Congressman Kirk.

"Small business owners need to hear about their peers who are already finding customers in other countries. The experts we brought to the 10th District will help Illinois small businesses to earn more and hire more employees."

Following the panel presentations, local entrepreneurs had an opportunity to ask federal officials and advocacy group leaders for advice on tax, regulatory, health insurance, and export assistance. Several entrepreneurs were most interested in advice on how to win government contracts that are designated for awards to small businesses.

Key papers and information from the conference can be found next Monday on Congressman Kirk's web site at www.house.gov/kirk .